

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 02074 131945 Z

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ACTION AF-18

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TAGS: PGOV, TS

SUBJECT: BOURGUIBA ADDRESSES MEMBERS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

REF: TUNIS 1612, 1330

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA CALLED MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO HIS PALACE WHERE HE ADDRESSED THEM ON SUBJECT OF AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION. MOST IMPORTANT PROPOSAL WAS TO ALLOW PRESIDENT TO SERVE MORE THAN THREE TERMS, AND BOURGUIBA ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO BE A CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT IN 1974. BOURGUIBA ALSO PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS IN AMENDMENTS REGARDING CENSURE. BOURGUIBA AGAIN ATTACKED BOTH AHMED BEN SALAH AND BAH I LADGHAM AS WELL AS OTHERS WHILE REPEATEDLY PRAISING HIMSELF. END SUMMARY.

2. ON APRIL 12, PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA CALLED MEMBERS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO HIS PALACE AND DELIVERED ADDRESS MAINLY CONCERNING AMENDMENTS HE HAD PROPOSED TO ASSEMBLY IN SPEECH MARCH 13 ( TUNIS 1330). REPEATEDLY CITING NEED FOR STABILITY AND CONTINUITY, BOURGUIBA PROPOSED THAT PRESIDENT NOT BE RESTRICTED TO ONLY THREE TERMS. USING RECENT TURKISH POLITICAL CRISIS AS EXAMPLE, BOURGUIBA SAID CONSTITUTION SHOULD NOT RESTRICT WILL OF PEOPLE, IF PEOPLE DESIRE PRESIDENT TO CONTINUE. IF PEOPLE FIND PRESIDENT INCAPABLE, THEY CAN VOTE HIM OUT OF POWER AT END OF HIS TERM, BUT IF PRESIDENT

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PAGE 02 TUNIS 02074 131945 Z

( READ BOURGUIBA) WAS PROVEN HIS COMPETENCE AND SHOWN GRAND QUALITIES OF CHIEF OF STATE, CONSTITUTION SHOULD NOT DEPRIVE COUNTRY OF HIS SERVICES. BOURGUIBA THEN CITED EXAMPLES OF TITO, FRANCO, CHURCHILL AND ROOSEVELT AS OLDER MEN WHO HAD SERVED AS CHIEF OF STATE FOR MANY YEARS.

2. BOURGUIBA STATED THAT " DEAD OF ALIVE, I CONSIDER MYSELF RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE PEOPLE, AND GLADLY ASSUME THIS RESPONSIBILITY IN ITS ENTIRETY." RETURNING TO SUBJECT AT END OF SPEECH, BOURGUIBA ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD BE CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT IN 1974. HE RECALLED THAT HE HAD BEEN OFFERED THE PRESIDENCY FOR LIFE AND STATED THAT " IN FACT, THE PRESIDENCY FOR LIFE IS HOMAGE AND MARK OF RECOGNITION FOR SERVICES I HAVE GIVEN TO TUNISIA."

3. TURNING TO PROPOSALS FOR MOTION OF CENSURE, BOURGUIBA SAID HE STILL OF OPINION THAT MOTION OF CENSURE INCOMPATIBLE WITH PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM, BUT HE PREPARED TO ACCEPT IT TO ENSURE AGAINST PROLONGED CONFLICT BETWEEN EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES. HE ASID HE OFFERING NEW PROPOSAL PROVIDING THAT IF MOTION OF CENSURE VOTED BY TWO- THIRDS OF DEPTUTIES, PRESIDENT CAN DISSOLVE ASSEMBLY AND CALL NEW ELECTIONS. BOURGUIBA'S PROPOSALS OF MARCH 13 HAD STATED THAT TWO SUCH MOTIONS WERE NECESSARY BEFORE PRESIDENT COULD DISSOLVE ASSEMBLY, BUT BOURGUIBA SAID THIS WOULD PROLONG CONFLICT AND NOTHING WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED BETWEEN TWO MOTIONS. THEREFORE, ON MOTION WAS MUCH MORE EFFICACIOUS AND PRUDENT IDEA. BOURGUIBA SAID THAT PRIMIN WOULD SHORTLY PRESENT NEW PROPOSALS TO ASSEMBLY.

4. BOURGUIBA AGAIN ATTACKED BEN SALAH FOR HIS " POLICIES AGAINST DIRECTIVES OF CHIEF OF STATE" AND ACCUSED BEN SALAH OF SHOWING HIM INCORRECT FIGURES TO JUSTIFY THESE POLICIES. BOURGUBA ALSO SAID HE HAD DISCHARGED BAH LADGHAM BECAUSE HE WAS INCAPABLE OF TAKING DECISIONS, LACKED INITIATIVE AND, CONTRARY TO BOURGUIBA'S INSTRUCTIONS, PERMITTED FORCE TO BE USED TO PUT DOWN ANTI- BEN SALAH DEMONSTRATION AT OUERDANINE.

5. MOST STRIKING FACET OF SPEECH WAS ITS TONE OF EGOTISM. BOURGUIBA DENIGRATED NOT ONLY " OUTS" LIKE BEN SALAH AND LADGHAM, BUT ALSO MANY OTHERS ON PRESENT OR PAST POLITICAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TUNIS 02074 131945 Z

SCENE, FOR EXAMPLE, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT MOKADDEM ( WHO

WAS PRESENT) AND THE LATE MONGI SLIM. BOURGUIBA GAVE SEVERAL LONG EXAMPLES OF HOW, WHILE OTHERS HAD NEARLY BROUGHT TUNISIA TO ITS KNEES, HE ALONE HAD SAVED COUNTRY.

6. TONE OF LAST TWO BOURGUIBA PUBLIC SPEECHES  
DEALING WITH INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY STRIDENT AND EGOTISTICAL ALMOST TO POINT OF MEGALOMANIA. HE IS OBVIOUSLY IN GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION, BUT CONTINUATION OF HIS CURRENT LINE WILL SHARPEN AND WIDEN PRESENT DIFFERENCES ON INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE. PRESENT SPEECH, LIKE PREVIOUS ONE ON MARCH 27 ( TUNIS 1612), IS SURE TO PROVOKE OPPOSITION, NOT ONLY TO " LIBERAL FACTION", BUT PROBABLY ALSO AMONG SOME OF BOURGUIBA' S OWN SUPPORTERS. IN ADDITION, BOURGUIBA ONCE MORE GIVING IMPRESSION OF INDECISIVENESS REGARDING CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES, JUST AS HE DID A YEAR AGO DURING CONTROVERSY OVER INSTITUTION OF VICE PRESIDENT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT FIRST SPEECH ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS MARCH 13 WRITTEN BY NOUIRA, AND THIS APRIL 12 SPEECH PROBABLY REFLECTS BOURGUIBA' S OWN CURRENT VIEWS MORE ACCURATELY. BUT ON WHOLE, SPEECH IS SOMEWHAT DISTURBING  
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